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SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/ARP, INR/NESA

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [KU](#)

SUBJECT: THIS WEEK AT THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

REF: A. KUWAIT 0099

[1](#)B. KUWAIT 0466

[1](#)C. KUWAIT 0800

[1](#)1. The Kheiran Pearls scandal (reftel A) continued to occupy center stage at the National Assembly this week. MP Mussalam Al-Barak accused former Finance Minister Yousef Al-Ibrahim of squandering public funds in relation to the project. In his first official statement since his resignation in January, Al-Ibrahim defended himself against Al-Barak's accusations and recommended he take the matter to the Minister's Court for final resolution. Al-Barak called Al-Ibrahim's resignation an "escape from political accountability" and indicated the National Assembly will vote on March 17 to refer Al-Ibrahim to the Minister's Court.

[1](#)2. Press reports claimed that some of the ten MPs who last week called for a vote of no-confidence in Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet and National Assembly Affairs Mohammed Sharar (reftel C) are considering withdrawing their support for the measure. Fearing they will not get the 24 votes necessary for the vote of no-confidence, these MPs are reluctant to lose face publicly over this issue during an election year. Because a minimum of 10 signatures is necessary for the motion to go forward, if any of the signatories withdraw their support, there will be no vote of no-confidence. One of the signatories of the measure, MP Abdul Mohsen Al-Midij, expressed his willingness to withdraw support if the government revokes the Kheiran Pearls contract. If the government does not voluntarily revoke the contract, the National Assembly is prepared to vote on a recommendation to revoke the contract and to refer the file to the Office of the Public Prosecutor.

[1](#)3. MPs Mikhliid Al-Azmi and Abdulla Al-Arada submitted a draft law to change the designation for passing dud checks from a felony to a misdemeanor. Designated as a legislative priority in November 2002, the issue of dud checks has already been addressed by the National Assembly, which passed a law removing the criminal penalty for passing bad checks on January 28. The Amir vetoed that bill out of fear that the reduction of the penalty would encourage people to pass bad checks and undermine commercial ventures in Kuwait.

[1](#)4. Five Islamist MPs are proposing a new amendment to the National Manpower Law of 2000 which would set a limit of seven on the number of children for whom a citizen may collect the children's allowance. The original Manpower Law set the number of children at five but the National Assembly passed an amendment to the Manpower Law in January (reftel B) that granted the allowance for an unlimited number of children; this amendment was vetoed by the Amir. The compromise has not yet been put before the National Assembly for a vote.

[1](#)5. The government referred a draft law to the National Assembly to allocate additional funds to various departments for the current year. The law includes an urgent request to take KD 500 million from the general reserve of the state to meet previously unforeseen expenses related to the current crisis. The Speaker of the National Assembly told the Ambassador on March 11 that he did not anticipate any problems gaining approval for this request.

JONES